

Johnstown Planning Commission
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, August 4, 2026

CITY OF JOHNSTOWN PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, August 4, 2026

CALL TO ORDER, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE, ROLL CALL:

The meeting was called to order at 5:01 p.m.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

The following members of Planning Commission were present for roll call:

Chairman Carthew and Commissioners Buday, White, Shirt, Deater, and Hamacek.

Commissioner Grandinetti was absent.

In addition, Dave Williams, Residential Construction Coordinator; Art Martynuska, City Manager; and Jerry R. Thomas, Land Surveyor, were present.

PUBLIC COMMENT (AGENDA ITEMS): None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Ms. Deater motioned to approve the Minutes of the July 7, 2026 Planning Commission meeting.
The motion was seconded by Mr. Buday. A roll call vote was taken:

Planning Commission:

Kate Deater - YES

Ian Shirt - YES

Mike Hamacek - YES

Donald Buday - YES

James White - ABSTAIN

James Carthew - Chairman - YES

The motion passed.

ACTION ITEMS:

Chair Carthew introduced the proposed subdivision involving Tax Parcel No. 81-007.-104.000. He explained the request consisted of a lot line revision to create Parcel 1-A through the subdivision of a portion of the Costa property, which would then be consolidated with the George property, identified as Tax Parcel No. 81-007.-204.000. He stated the proposal included the establishment of a tie line across Woodvale Avenue and invited questions or concerns regarding the subdivision as presented by Mr. Jerry Thomas.

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Mr. Hamacek inquired whether the proposed subdivision and consolidation would prevent the George residence and garage from being sold as separate properties in the future.

Jerry R. Thomas, Land Surveyor, confirmed the proposed subdivision and consolidation would permanently combine the properties into a single lot. He stated the residence and garage could not be sold separately and explained a new deed would be recorded reflecting the consolidated property as one parcel.

Mr. Hamacek stated the consolidation was necessary because a freestanding accessory structure without a principal dwelling on the same lot would not be permitted.

Mr. Thomas confirmed Mr. Hamacek's understanding.

Mr. White motioned to approve the Subdivision. Mr. Buday seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken:

Planning Commission:

Kate Deater - YES

Ian Shirt - YES

Mike Hamacek - YES

Donald Buday - YES

James White - YES

James Carthew - Chairman - YES

The motion passed unanimously.

On behalf of the George family, Mr. Thomas thanked the Commission for their approval of the Subdivision.

Chair Carthew next introduced the merger of the tax parcels. He stated the request was for the consolidation of Tax Parcel Nos. 81-007.-101.000, 81-007.-102.000, 81-007.-103.000, and the residual portion of Tax Parcel No. 81-007.-104.000 into a single parcel. He asked whether there were any questions or concerns and noted the proposal was illustrated on the site plan prepared by Mr. Thomas.

Mr. Thomas had no additional comments beyond those previously provided. He explained a new deed would be recorded to reflect the merger of the three parcels and the residual portion of the fourth parcel into a single property.

Ms. Deater asked whether the consolidated parcel could be subdivided again in the future if the property owners desired.

Mr. Thomas responded the parcel could be subdivided in the future, provided the owners completed the required subdivision process and obtained the necessary approvals in accordance with applicable procedures.

Mr. Hamacek motioned to approve the Tax Parcel Merger. Mr. Buday seconded the motion.

Planning Commission:

Kate Deater - YES

Ian Shirt - YES

Mike Hamacek - YES

Donald Buday - YES

James White - YES

James Carthew - Chairman - YES

The motion passed unanimously.

On behalf of the Costa family, Mr. Thomas thanked the Commission for their approval of the Tax Parcel Merger.

OLD BUSINESS:

Chair Carthew provided an update on implementation of the Comprehensive Plan, stating the discussions with the City and the Planning Commission regarding the formation of working groups were ongoing. He indicated additional committee discussions outside of regular meetings might be necessary to establish subcommittees and begin implementation efforts. He encouraged Planning Commission members to review the adopted Comprehensive Plan, particularly its six identified pillars of opportunity, in preparation for further discussion at the next meeting with the goal of establishing subcommittees in coordination with the City.

Mr. White stated the Commission should move forward with implementation of the Comprehensive Plan without delay. He emphasized the plan had been adopted, and advancing its recommendations was important to the City's economic development.

Chair Carthew proposed using the beginning of the academic year as an opportunity to organize committee work during the fall and winter months, with the objective of developing initiatives that could be implemented the following spring.

Mr. White suggested involving local colleges, including the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown (UPJ), by engaging students to assist committee efforts and encouraging broad community participation.

Chair Carthew agreed community involvement would be beneficial and noted neighborhood organizations and members of the advisory committee that helped develop the Comprehensive Plan could also participate. He stated implementation of the Comprehensive Plan would remain a recurring item on future meeting agendas and encouraged Commission members to become more familiar with the document in order to identify areas for contribution. He also proposed establishing a separate subcommittee to review the City's zoning districts, observing that the current zoning map is outdated and may warrant revisions to better support future development and economic growth. He noted Commission members received copies of the zoning ordinance for reference.

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Mr. Buday commented the City's existing zoning pattern reflected conditions from a time when the City's population was significantly larger, resulting in a mix of zoning districts that may no longer be appropriate for current development patterns.

Chair Carthew agreed the age of the zoning map demonstrated the need for a comprehensive review of the City's zoning districts.

Mr. Hamacek referenced a three-story brick building on Church Street as part of the discussion regarding existing zoning classifications.

Chair Carthew concluded the zoning discussion by noting that certain industrial zoning areas had historically been established because of the railroad, reinforcing the need to evaluate whether existing zoning designations continue to serve the City's current needs.

Chair Carthew next provided an update regarding renovations at Garfield School for the Greater Johnstown School District. He stated significant activity was occurring at the site, primarily involving interior renovations, but noted the Planning Commission was interested in determining whether any exterior development or site work was planned because of the amount of surrounding land. He advised the zoning department had been asked to review the project, and he would follow up with staff after learning that the zoning representative was unable to attend the meeting.

Mr. White asked whether the scope of the renovations included demolition of interior walls or reconfiguration of classrooms, stating that such work could warrant submission of plans for Commission review.

Chair Carthew responded the zoning department previously advised the Commission that the project consisted of interior renovations only. He stated, because the use of the property was not changing, the Planning Commission's primary concern was whether any exterior improvements or site development required review.

Mr. Hamacek recalled prior evaluations of the building identified maintenance needs, including deteriorated plaster in the stairwells, and noted similar interior repair work had been anticipated.

Chair Carthew stated his understanding was that the work consisted primarily of cosmetic interior renovations and the classroom layouts were not being substantially altered. He would seek additional clarification from the zoning department. He concluded the discussion of old business by noting that the B&L Wine project continued to progress satisfactorily and he had no further old business items to present.

NEW BUSINESS:

Mr. Hamacek suggested developing an informational packet for new homeowners outlining their responsibilities as City residents. He explained many individuals relocating from other

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communities may be unfamiliar with local requirements, including responsibilities related to refuse collection, sidewalk maintenance, and other municipal obligations. He suggested distributing the information through local real estate agents to improve awareness and potentially reduce blight-related issues.

Mr. White expressed support for the proposal.

Chair Carthew agreed the concept could also help educate residents about municipal services, including street sweeping schedules.

Mr. Shirt observed some residents are unaware of street sweeping restrictions and do not recognize the posted signs.

Mr. White added many new residents may come from communities that do not provide similar services and, therefore, lack familiarity with local requirements.

Chair Carthew stated the proposal aligned with the Comprehensive Plan's housing and neighborhood objectives and would serve as an appropriate project for one of the implementation working groups. He suggested the Planning Commission could recommend that the City develop informational packets for new homeowners and noted similar materials were provided in connection with certain building permit applications. He indicated the item would be added to the Commission's new business list as part of Comprehensive Plan implementation.

Mr. Hamacek noted Jimmy T's recently closed.

Chair Carthew acknowledged the closure and stated it was unfortunate. He commented Main Street managers had been made aware of the situation. He was uncertain whether the business had sought assistance from the City before closing.

REPORTS:

Chair Carthew advised, although Melissa Stiles was unable to attend the meeting, she submitted a brief report in addition to the monthly planning activity report provided to the Commission. He encouraged members to review the report and bring any questions forward at the next meeting. He reported updated plans had been received for the Mom's House project, the plan review had been completed, and the applicant was expected to obtain the required building permits. He also reported on a proposed smoke shop at 142 Walnut Street, located at the corner of Main and Walnut Streets.

He stated a stop-work order had been issued after interior renovations commenced without the required permits and the property owner was advised of design and aesthetic requirements applicable within the Central Business District, including compliance with district design guidelines.

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Chair Carthew thanked Ms. Stiles for providing the update despite her absence and acknowledged her continued support of the Planning Commission.

Mr. Martynuska provided an update on the Public Safety Building project, reporting that the project schedule had been delayed after receipt of congressionally directed federal funding required additional environmental review and compliance measures. He stated the additional funding increased the project's available resources by approximately \$2.8 million and described the delay as a positive challenge. He reported radon testing produced negative results, floodplain notification requirements were being completed, and contingency plans remained in place to maintain the project schedule.

Chair Carthew asked whether the floodplain review would require additional floodproofing measures for the project.

Mr. Martynuska responded no additional floodproofing work was anticipated, because the necessary design elements had already been incorporated into the project. He further reported the initial bid solicitation was canceled after receiving an insufficient number of bids. The project would be rebid to satisfy federal procurement requirements. He noted competition for contractors had been affected by ongoing construction activity in the region, particularly in Cresson.

Chair Carthew was aware of the increased regional construction activity.

Mr. Martynuska explained rebidding the project would demonstrate a good-faith effort to obtain competitive bids, as required under federal funding guidelines.

Mr. Williams reported hearing that the former Penn Traffic Building had been listed for sale through an online auction platform. He stated, based on information received, the auction was expected to conclude at the end of August with ownership anticipated to transfer by October 2026. He would provide additional information as it became available.

Chair Carthew asked whether the property sale involved a foreclosure.

Mr. Williams did not believe the property was in foreclosure and understood that the owner had elected to market the building through an auction website previously used for other properties.

Mr. Martynuska inquired about the building's current tenants.

Chair Carthew noted the Federal District Court occupied space within the building.

Mr. Martynuska added the building also housed unemployment compensation offices, private businesses, attorneys, and other commercial tenants.

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Chair Carthew stated the property should remain on the Commission's radar because of its significance.

Mr. Martynuska also provided an update regarding the City's participation in the Keystone Opportunity Zone (KOZ) program. He reported coordination meetings had been held with neighboring municipalities. The City's required submission identifying approximately 40 acres of eligible property had been completed and forwarded to the Cambria County Planning Commission before the established deadline.

He explained an additional KOZ program authorized through subsequent legislation would focus more heavily on residential development and described the tax incentives available under both programs, including exemptions from certain state taxes associated with redevelopment and occupancy for qualifying projects over a ten-year period.

Chair Carthew observed the KOZ incentives represented valuable economic development tools for future redevelopment efforts.

Mr. Hamacek asked whether a minimum level of development activity would be required for the designated KOZ properties.

Mr. Martynuska responded no specific development threshold had been established. The City's primary obligation was identifying the eligible acreage for designation.

Chair Carthew concluded the KOZ program represented another implementation tool that could support the goals and recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan.

PUBLIC COMMENT - NON-AGENDA ITEMS: None

RECESS/ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 5:27 p.m.